

Appendix B

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Public Water System Definitions and Terminology

State law defines a “public water system” as “any system providing water for human consumption through pipes or other constructed conveyances, excluding a system serving only one single-family residence and a system with four or fewer connections all of which serve residences on the same farm.” Under this definition, even wells supplying only two houses are designated as public water systems.

The Department of Health (DOH) regulates public water systems under two main categories. Group A systems are those systems regulated under the federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). Group B systems are regulated under state law, but are not regulated under SDWA. These categories are described below. Further information can be obtained from DOH regulations at WAC 246-290-020.

- ☐ Group A, Community Water Systems provide water to 15 or more service connections used by year-round residents for 180 days or more in each calendar year; or provide water to less than 15 connections that serve at least 25 year-round residents. Community water systems may serve cities, individual subdivisions, mobile home parks, and other types of communities.
- ☐ Group A, Non-Community Water Systems provide water to the public, but not to residential communities. DOH regulates two sub-categories: Transient and Non-transient. Examples include campgrounds, restaurants, motels, schools, day-care centers, and some businesses
- ☐ Group B systems are systems that meet the definition of a public water system, but do not fall into one of the categories listed above. For example, these include systems serving smaller communities or subdivisions ranging from 2 to 14 residential service connections.

Public water systems deliver water to retail customers through service connections, which may or may not be metered. Examples of sites served by each service connection are:

- ☐ one single-family residence;
- ☐ a multifamily site that includes many households;
- ☐ a commercial or industrial establishment, motel, or restaurant;
- ☐ a school, hospital, or other institution;
- ☐ a park or other public facility.

Typically larger public water systems serve very diverse communities that may have many of these types of service connections. In contrast, small community water systems often deliver virtually all of their water to single-family residences.